

Caregiver Connection

July 2011

A monthly publication for Washington state foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers.
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION



COURT HEARINGS

An important time for your voice to be heard

Children's Administration values the knowledge caregivers have about children placed in their home. We encourage you to share this information, especially at scheduled court hearings, so the judge and others involved in the case can hear information about the child from your perspective. Caregivers have a right to be heard in court about children in their care and no one knows better what is going on with the child in your home than you do!

The child's social worker will let you know the date of the next court hearing. A good time to talk about this is during the monthly visit with the social worker. Also, don't hesitate to ask the social worker if you need to find out when a hearing is scheduled. We want to make sure you have time to plan if you want to attend the hearing. If you have recently received an updated Individual Service & Safety Plan (ISSP), it will state the date/time of the next hearing.

Hearings are scheduled during the work day, and it may not always be possible for you to attend. If you are unable to be present at the hearing, you can still share your information about the child with the court. The Caregiver's Report to the Court <http://asd.dshs.wa.gov/FormsMan/formDetails.aspx?ID=7188> is the document each caregiver can use to record information about the child. Keep your report concise; judges don't have a great deal of time for each case. This report should be given to your social worker to file with the court, or you can bring it with you when you come to court. If you bring the report with you to the court hearing, come early so copies can be made of the document.

Here are some helpful hints on how to make sure your voice is heard:

1. Be aware of court dates and locations - ask for this information at the child's monthly Health & Safety visit; check the date on the current ISSP. Don't hesitate to contact the worker to obtain this information.
2. Make sure you know the court's Legal Number for the child's case; you can ask the social worker for this information. It is contained on the ISSP just after the child's name.
3. Provide accurate and factual information about the child. Describe what you have observed and discuss the child's needs.

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4. Be organized, prepared and concise; make your most important points first.
5. Be respectful, sincere and polite; avoid being judgmental - especially about other people involved in the case.
6. Send a copy to the social worker, so they can make copies to bring to the court hearing
7. Bring your report with you when you come to the hearing.
8. Let the social worker know you are there, and let him/her know if you wish to be introduced to the court.
9. Courts may schedule many hearings at the same time; the judge will decide which cases to hear first, so be prepared you may have to wait.
10. Most judges like to hear directly from caregivers; however, it is your decision on how you would like to be heard – you do not have to speak, it is fine to simply submit your report.

Helping you find resources WIN 2-1-1

WIN 2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember phone number you can call for assistance in locating health and human service information to help meet a need. Information about these services is also available through a searchable online database at: <http://www.resourcehouse.com/win211>. Once you reach the website, click on "Start a Search" to find the online directory of health and human service programs and resources like food banks (food pantries), emergency shelters, transportation, health clinics, rent or utilities assistance, legal help, etc. You can even save the searches you've completed! If you need additional assistance, you can also call 2-1-1 to speak directly with an Information & Referral Specialist. Knowledge about this exceptional data base can be particularly helpful for youth who are about to leave care, or whose guardianships may be coming to an end.

Regional meetings seek input from caregivers

Children's Administration seeks your input on two significant initiatives:

1. Improving our home study process for all out-of-home caregivers by implementing a unified home study. This will help improve outcomes for children in out-of home care and reduce duplicate work for caregivers and social workers. We want to hear your ideas for improving home studies.
2. Restructuring our Recruitment and Retention contracts. Please join us to talk about recruitment and retention services important to you.

Jeanne McShane, Acting Administrator for the Division of Licensed Resources will attend two meetings in each of the new Regions to get your input between August and September of this year. All caregivers for CA dependent children are welcome to attend any of these meetings.

- August 2, 2011 6:00-8:00 pm; Yakima
Children's Administration Office;
Conference Room 5, 2nd Floor
1002 North 16th Avenue
- August 9, 2011 6:30-8:30 pm; Lynnwood
Lynnwood - Mill Creek Four Square Church
1415 164th St. SW
- August 10, 2011 6:00-8:00 pm; Kent
Children's Administration King South; Tahoma Room
1313 W. Meeker Street #102 (use side entrance)
- August 16, 2011 6:00-8:00 pm; Kelso
Children's Administration Office - 711 Vine St.
- September 6, 2011 5:30-8:30 pm; Tacoma
Sizzler Restaurant; 10204 S. Tacoma Way
- September 24, 2011 (Time: TBD); Spokane
Mini Conference for Caregivers
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
8441 North Indian Trail Road

Voices of children

On May 18, Kinship Caregiver Day in Washington, the winners of the annual Voices of Children Contest, were announced at a two-day gathering at Great Wolf Lodge in Grand Mound. The event is coordinated by Family Education and Support Services and supported by Twin Star Credit Union. This year nearly 50 entries were received from children and youth ages 5 – 19. The winners come from Clark, Grays Harbor, King, Lewis, Mason and Thurston counties. Here are some of the entries. Others will be published in coming editions.

Nana is there for me in the mornings
She also attends to me each and every night
Just to think about Nana anytime
Is positively joy and sheer delight
Nana reads to me beside the open fire
And warms my heart with true desire
We have laughed a lot and sometimes even cried
As we sat close and hugged each other from side to side
Nana and I share special memories along our way
Never forgetting to give thanks and remembering to pray
Our love reflected a rare bond from the start
Showing direction and meaning of the heart
Nana spoils me with her unselfish pleasure
With fond memories to hold on to and treasure
She embraces me with her support, love, and care
And is never too busy for me while teaching me to share
Nana works very hard, and is seldom in a hurry
Makes time to listen and encourages me not to worry
My sun continues to rise and shine
Because I know that Nana is mine!

— Madison, Age 12, Spokane, WA

My Great Aunt and
Uncle came to see me.
They took me to their
house, so I would not
be alone I still felt sad.
Then they became my
Mom and Dad Now I am
not sad, I am glad.

— Donovan, age 6 ½,
Ridgefield, WA

I live with my Grandparents cuz my mom didn't take care
of us. Now we don't have to go to foster care. We go to the car
races, and the beach and Seattle. My ear was broken now it is
fixed and now kids don't tease me. Dr. Gruss fix it. My papa got
me a curious George to make me feel better. They take me to
Cub Scouts and I am a wolf. I have clean clothes. I have good
food and my own bedroom.

— Johnathan, Age 7, Aberdeen, WA



Summer Tips

Summer Meals Program (June – August)

The Washington State Summer Food Services Program (also known as Summer Meals Program) is a federal nutrition program providing free meals and snacks to children and teens during the summer months, June – August. Meal sites are located in schools, parks, recreation centers, community based organizations and camps. In addition to meals, many sites provide fun activities for kids.

Kids and teens 18 years old and younger are eligible; no proof of income, address or citizenship is required.

You can find summer meal sites here: <https://resources.parenthelp123.org/service/summer-meals>

Call the Family Food Hotline for summer meal sites 1-888-FOOD-WA (1-888-436-6392). To learn more about Summer Meals and how you could bring a new site to your community, contact Claire Lane, Food Security Program Manager at WithinReach, 206-830-7642.



Sources: websites of the American Academy of Pediatric Physicians, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control, WebMD, KidsHealth. Reprinted with permission from FosterParentCollege.com Connections

Summer Safety Tips About Bites

Summer time is fun time outside with long lazy days; it's also prime time for injuries and accidents. Here is information about some of the summer "pests" that might try to sink their teeth into you and your children.

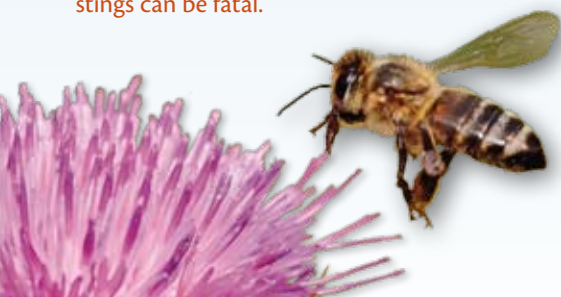
BEE STINGS

Most bee stings will hurt for a day or two but aren't dangerous. Try to prevent stings by teaching children:

- Stay calm around bees; when bees are scared they attack
- Don't swat at or run from bees; that scares them
- Avoid perfumes, lip balms and lotions that have a sweet, fruity or floral scent
- Keep food and drinks covered so they don't attract bees
- Bees are drawn to bright "flowery" colors like yellow, pink, orange or red

If stung, don't squeeze to get the stinger out. If the bee has left the stinger behind, as evidenced by blackish particles on the skin, try scraping these off with a credit card. Do not squeeze the stinger; venom still in the sac may get into your system. Wash with warm water and soap. Apply a paste made of meat tenderizer or baking soda and a few drops of water. If after a couple of days the sting site becomes hot, red, or has other signs of infection, consult a doctor.

If the sting victim has trouble breathing or has other extreme reactions, call 911. Allergies to bee stings can be fatal.



MOSQUITOES AND TICKS

Mosquito and tick bites itch. Plus, mosquitoes can transmit West Nile Virus and ticks can transmit Lyme disease. Both diseases can be quite dangerous for small children, elderly adults, and people with compromised immune systems.

To prevent bites:

- Cover up. Clothing is a good barrier for insects
- Use insect repellent when in an area prone to these pests
- Do not use insect repellents on infants
- Ask a pediatrician for advice on protecting infants and small children
- Prevent mosquitoes from laying eggs near your home by eliminating standing water in flower pots, tires, unused birdbaths, etc.
- Check nightly for ticks and remove immediately; it can take a while for a tick to transmit enough bacteria to cause infection and this simple step may prevent disease. These areas are especially popular for ticks:
 - Under the arms
 - In and around the ears
 - Back of the knees, between the legs and between the toes
 - Around the waist and inside the belly button
 - In and around hair

If bitten:

- Mosquito bites can be treated with topical anti-itch cream and Benadryl.
- Remove a tick by grasping it close to the head or mouth and pulling the whole thing gently straight out.
- Do not crush or "break" the tick. Kill it in a cotton swab soaked with rubbing alcohol, toss it in a fire, or flush it.
- Wash hands immediately after removing a tick. Clean the bite with rubbing alcohol.
- Watch tick or mosquito bite sites for unusual rashes or signs of infection. If the victim becomes ill within a few weeks of a bite, contact your doctor.



Important numbers to know when you take care of children in out-of-home care

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

ON-GOING AND CRISIS SUPPORTS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Under contracts with the state, three private agencies are working to build supports for you within the foster care community. Supports include hubs, support groups, and matching new foster parents with veteran foster parents. To get connected:

- If you live in Eastern Washington, the Olympic Peninsula down through Pacific County or from Thurston County to Clark County, call 1-888-794-1794.
- If you live in King County or any counties north of King County, call 206-605-0664.
- If you live in Pierce or Kitsap counties, call 253-473-9252.
- If you live in King County, the Friends of Youth CARE program provides short-term counseling, education and support to help you care for your most difficult children. 1-888-263-3457 or 206-915-0459.

Family Help Line: 1-800-932-HOPE or www.parenttrust.org. The Family Help Line is a free, statewide training and referral line for the families of Washington state. Last year, the Family Help Line received more than 5,000 calls and requests for information. Calls can last up to 90 minutes and parents can call as often as needed.

Support for foster parents under investigation for allegations of abuse or neglect: Foster Parent Investigation Retention Support Team (FIRST) 253-219-6782. Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., or leave a message and receive a return call within 24 hours.

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

Mental Health Crisis Line Information: The crisis line telephone number for your county or region is available on the DSHS Mental Health Division website at: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/crisis.shtml>.

GENERAL FOSTER PARENT INFORMATION FOR THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of Washington State is an all volunteer non-profit association. It is led by experienced caregivers who provide support and helpful services to all caregivers (foster, adoptive, and kinship) in Washington State. In addition, FPAWS advocates for caregivers with Washington's legislative officials, all levels of Children's Administration staff and other community service providers to enhance the child welfare system. Contact FPAWS at fpaws.org or 1-800-391-CARE (2273).

Kitsap and Pierce County information about becoming a foster parent or to receive foster parent support: Foster Care Resource Network, 253-473-9252. Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or leave a message and receive a return call by the next business day.

RESOURCE INFORMATION AVAILABLE STATEWIDE

Get connected to information on resources in your area by calling 211 – a toll free number.

Girl Scouts of Western Washington: Fostering a Future: MeccaYS@girlscouts.org

Women, Infant and Children Program (WIC):

<http://www.parenthelp123.org/resources/food-resources>

Children's Administration Foster Parent Website: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/>

Children's Administration Foster Parent Training Website – Trainings are open to all licensed foster parents, licensed relative caregivers and unlicensed caregivers. For information about foster parent and caregiver training, check out:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training.asp>

CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION FOSTER CARE LISTSERV

Join the 2,200 people who have subscribed to the List Serve

<http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=fosterparents&&A=1> for updated information on resources for the work you do in caring for children.

Family Planning Services are designed to help avoid unwanted or mistimed pregnancy and are available through your local Community Service Office (CSO). Each CSO has a full time Family Planning Nurse to help provide services to Medicaid eligible clients.

There is also a Family Planning hotline number 1-800-770-4334.



Free school lunches for foster children

Although summer has just started, we want you to know about a new federal law - The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) of 2010. This law mandates children placed in foster care are eligible for free school meals without the requirement of completing an application, if their "care and placement is the responsibility of child welfare". This applies equally to children placed in licensed foster homes or placed by Children's Administration (CA) with relative caregivers.

This federal law changes how a foster child's eligibility for the free school meal program is determined. Previously, a separate application for free and reduced price meals was submitted for a foster child who was considered a household of one. Now you no longer need to submit an application.

Please note: a foster child in your household does not create eligibility for free meals to all children in the household. Participating in other programs such as: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as the Basic Food Program in Washington State, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservation (FDPIR) does allow the entire household to participate. A foster child will, however, add to the number of household members and may enable non foster children to qualify for free or reduced price school meals based on size and income.

If you do not want your foster child(ren) to receive free school meals, you must notify your foster child(ren)'s school.

Provider numbers you need

Each foster parent and relative caregiver has an individual provider number assigned in FamLink, the CA database. This helps CA identify each provider and the placements in your home. Caregivers also have individual Social Service Payment System (SSPS) provider numbers to identify payments for reimbursement. If you need to know either your FamLink or SSPS provider number, please contact your licensor. If you are not a foster parent and you need to know your provider numbers, please contact the social worker for the child in your care.